



The communicative actions associated with perceived online trolling on British and Hungarian political blogs

Marton Petyko

m.petyko@aston.ac.uk

I. Introduction

1. Research question

What communicative actions do users associate with perceived online trolling in the comment threads of British political blogs?

2. Background

Trolling in the academic literature:

- intentional (Golf-Papez & Veer, 2017), non-normative (Fichman & Sanfilippo, 2015) and harmful (Sest & March, 2017: 69) behaviour that involves deception (Dahlberg, 2001), aggression (Hardaker, 2013) and disruption (Turner et al., 2005)

This project, however, does not aim at providing online trolling with a new academic definition.

I instead treat *trolling* as a metapragmatic label that ordinary internet users employ to conceptualise, describe and evaluate others' (and their own) communicative behaviour

This study, therefore, looks at the metapragmatic discourse around perceived trolling rather than trolling itself.

II. Data and method

1. The corpus

Comment threads of British and Hungarian political blogs from 2015 where at least one user calls someone a troll or describes someone's behaviour as trolling at least once.

	British corpus	Hungarian corpus
Blogs	28	29
Comment threads	1,713	519
Troll accusation comments	6,129	1,118
Troll action comments	2,144	428

2. Method

Qualitative content analysis of the troll action comments

Identifying the perceived communicative actions users attribute to those they call trolls in these comments

Calculating the frequency of mentions of the perceived troll actions in the comments

III. Findings

Users associate 16 communicative actions with perceived online trolling, which can be grouped into 4 larger categories:

1. Spamming (Br: 18.2%, H: 31.8%)

- Posting too many, extremely long, or unusually short comments (Br: 4.2%, H: 5.6%)
- Posting (near-)identical comments (Br: 5.7%, H: 6.5%)
- Extensively citing external sources (Br: 4.3%, H: 8.9%)
- Posting irrelevant comments (Br: 5.9%, H: 16.8%)
- Posting incoherent or incomprehensible comments (Br: 1%, H: 3%)

2. Ignoring or withholding information (Br: 13.2%, H: 19.6%)

- Ignoring the original blog post or other comments when posting (Br: 4.9%, H: 10.3%)
- Giving vague or evasive answers to questions directed at them (Br: 0.3%, H: 0.7%)
- Refusing to support their statements with evidence or arguments or to argue against the statements they disagree with (Br: 4.3%, H: 9.6%)
- Refusing to share any personal information about themselves and hiding their previous comments (Br: 4.3%, H: 0.9%)

3. Flaming (Br: 87.6%, H: 81.5%)

- Making statements and arguments perceived as untrue, potentially misleading, unreasonable, or contrarian (Br: 76.4%, H: 69.4%)
- Directly belittling, insulting, threatening, harassing, or otherwise attacking other participants (Br: 16.2%, H: 21.3%)
- Asking personal or loaded questions (Br: 1.5%, H: 1.6%)
- Using language perceived as "incorrect" or "inappropriate" (Br: 6.7%, H: 6.1%)

4. Dishonesty (Br: 29.1%, H: 29.2%)

- Making insincere statements (Br: 23.8%, H: 26.2%)
- Making contradictory statements (Br: 0.6%, H: 0.5%)
- Posting comments from multiple accounts or from an account also used by others (Br: 6.1%, H: 3.3%)

